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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

September 5, 1980

Admiral Stansfield Turner
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, DC 20505

(DSB)

Dear Stan:

At my request, SecDef has approved the idea of forming a permanent Reconnaissance Task Force of the Defense Science Board which will, as one of its primary objectives, act as an advisory board for the NRO.

My reasons for taking this initiative are twofold. ¹First and foremost, I believe that the NRO as an institution needs some sort of continuing repository of senior corporate memory and judgment. Most institutions have one or more devices for achieving these objectives, however from my 17 years of association with the organization I observe that the covert and austere nature of the NRO, coupled with the relatively rapid personnel turnover of many of its parts, creates a relatively weak corporate memory. I worry that the characteristics of the institution which have made it so valuable for the country are being eroded or lost inadvertently. I believe that a continuing body of senior people who are focused on the institution and its activities for both the short and long run will provide a useful insurance service. ²Secondarily, such a group will form a currently knowledgeable body of senior judgment accessible not only to NRO but other Defense and Intelligence components.

In formulating this proposal, the strong DCI interest in and dependence on the NRO was recognized, and the intent is to assure the DCI a role in membership selection, access to the task force and its products, and if desired, use of the group. As a first step you may wish to suggest candidates for membership in the group. It is my objective to assemble an ecumenical group with respect to Defense and civil agencies, government and industrial interests, and developer and user perspective, and you may have some specific individuals in mind.

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One of the early tasks I have in mind is the review of our acquisition practices. Generally speaking the NRO process has been a successful mechanism for getting advanced technology translated rapidly and effectively into useful intelligence systems. Over the years the acquisition style and practices have changed as have the management and overview procedures surrounding the NRO. There is growing concern within both the government and industry parts of the NRO family that the special streamlined management process is being eroded, while others in OMB and RMS are skeptical about the special quality of this process. One manifestation of this was last year's \$35 million arbitrary budget reduction. For my own purposes and many others who need confidence and understanding in this process, it will be valuable to have the current judgment of an outside group of experienced senior people.

My immediate objective was to inform you of this action and solicit candidate names, but let me know if there are any other issues you would like to address.



Robert J. Hermann

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